

REMARKS

Upon entry of the above amendments, this application will contain claims 1-23, and 32-57 pending and under consideration. Claims 24-31 have been canceled without prejudice to be presented in a divisional application. New claims 51-57 have been added. It is believed that no new matter is introduced by the claim amendments.

In a communication dated June 12, 2003, restriction of one of the following distinct species was required:

- Species I: Figures 3 and 4
- Species II: Figures 5(a), 5(b), 6, 7, and 8
- Species III: Figures 9 and 10
- Species IV: Figures 11, 12, and 13.

In response to the Restriction Requirement, the Applicants elect to prosecute on the merits, Species II (Figures 5(a), 5(b), 6, 7, and 8) with traverse. It is believed that claims 1-12, 14-23, 42, 44, 45, and 46 read on the elected species.

It is respectfully urged that independent claim 1 is a generic claim to Species I, II, III, and IV. To be generic, a claim should no material limitation additional to those recited in the species claims, and must comprehend within its confines the organization covered in each of the species. (MPEP §806.04(d).) Claim 1 as noted in the Restriction Requirement, reads on each of Species II, III, and IV. (See page 2) Additionally, Species I, Figures 3 and 4 include a reinforcing element illustrated in Figure 3 as band 32. Consequently, it is believed that claim 1 is generic to all of the Species.

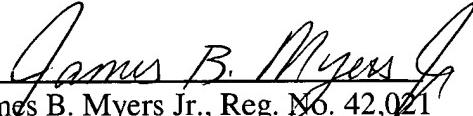
Furthermore, under 37 CFR §1.141 a reasonable number of species can be examined together in a single application. Consequently, it is believed that all claims readable on Species I, II, III, and IV can be readily examined together.

New claims 51-57 have been added. It is believed that new, independent claim 51 is a generic claim to Species I, II, III, and IV. In addition, it is believed that claims 52, 53, and 57 read on Species II. Claims 54 and 55, read on Species III, and IV. Claim 56 reads on Species I. As noted above, one of the differences between Species I and Species

II is the configuration of the reinforcing element. In Figure 3, the reinforcing element is illustrated as a peripheral band 32. In Figure 5(a), the reinforcing element is illustrated as rods or spars 38a and 38b. Consequently, it is maintained that claim 51 contains no material element additional to those recited in the species claims and includes the organization covered by each of the respective species.

In light of the above, examination of claims 1-23 and 32-57, which read on Species I, II, III, and IV, is requested. The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned attorney if there are any questions about this submission or other matters, which may be addressed in that fashion.

Respectfully submitted,

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